

BRIDGE ON TRAINING WHEELS

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Learning how to ride a bicycle is a rather frightening experience. A child often overcomes fear by first learning to sort of ride with training wheels. A child learning to swim overcomes fear by using flotation devices to sort of swim. What about the frightening game of bridge? It would be great if potential players could sort of play bridge before being overwhelmed by the full game. Good news! They can.

In 2011, I designed such a game by melding simple features of old forms of bridge. If you are an experienced bridge player, you may wish to introduce the game to non-bridge playing family members and friends. The most complete description of the game appears in my very small book *Play Bumblepuppy Bridge* (Master Point Press, 2017). It is available in both standard book form and as an ebook. This book was written primarily for non-bridge players so that they could learn the game on their own. Of course, I hope experienced bridge players will read it and introduce this very simple game to others.

The three main characteristics:

- 1) Card play is identical to standard bridge. The player sitting to the left of declarer makes the opening lead, dummy is placed on the table, and the thirteen tricks are played.
- 2) Bidding, as bridge players know it, is almost totally removed. Either dealer or dealer's partner selects what suit will be trump for a hand, or chooses notrump. That player literally **declares** what will be trump, as was done 120 years ago at bridge tables. There is no competitive bidding. All contracts are at the one-level

with the primary goal of winning seven tricks, but the more the merrier. All the non-dealer partnership can do is PASS or DOUBLE.

- 3) The scoring is very simple. Whichever side wins more than six tricks, gets one point for each trick won above six. Doubles and redoubles multiply the score by 2 or 4 respectively. No bonuses for game, slam or any other accomplishment. Scoring is essential. Without scoring, a game is not a game. The winning side is the highest scoring side after four hands are played. Obviously, by rotating the dealer, each side has two opportunities to declare trump.

On YouTube, one can watch three hands being played. Just enter either “Bumblepuppy Bridge” or “Julian Laderman”

If you feel this game is not very exciting without competitive bidding, I strongly agree. This is actually a good feature since bumblepuppy bridge players will quickly want to transform themselves into real bridge players. At least, by playing bumblepuppy bridge, they will have the immediate fun of sort of playing bridge.